Theories of Information Systems (Norwegian national PhD course)

Theories of Information Systems is an intensive 2 weeks course taught jointly by the Information Systems group at the Department of Informatics, University of Oslo (UiO), and the Department of Information Systems at the University of Agder (UiA).

The course is open for registration for PhD students at the University of Agder and the University of Oslo, and also for PhD students external to these two universities.

External students must apply by filling this form and get approval to participate as a guest student at the University of Oslo or the University of Agder.

The completed course is approved as a 10 ECTS PhD course at the PhD program at the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences at the University of Oslo (course code INF9200) and the PhD program specialization in information systems at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Agder (course code IS-607).

Learning objectives
On successful completion of the course, the student will be able to:
- Describe the theoretical foundations of contemporary information systems (IS) research
- Discuss the relationship between key theoretical approaches and research methodology, ontology, and epistemology
- Evaluate the appropriateness and usability of these approaches in relation to his/her own research interests in information systems
- Discuss the relationship and impact of IS theories in relation to his/her dissertation topic
- Compare, appraise and critique theoretical/conceptual frameworks on the relationship between information technology (IT) and organization
- Characterize and compare various traditions of information systems research

Objectives
The objective of this course is to provide a theoretical foundation for research in information systems. The course will introduce students to the major influential theories and current research streams in the field of information systems. The course will provide the participants with understanding of the micro and macro perspectives on the utilization of information technology and information systems, and the mutual relationship between information systems and organizational and social structure and behavior.

Content
- The role of theory in IS research
- The concept of IT/IS artefacts as the core of the IS discipline
- Examples of influential theories in IS research, and their ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions and implications
- Theories on IT and organizational change, innovation and strategy
- Theories on global issues in IS

**Teaching and learning activities of the course**
- Lectures
  - Each session has compulsory readings and readings for discussion assigned. Particular students will be assigned specific papers to read and discuss with the class.
- Interactive seminar after each lecture
- Individual study of the literature and reflection
- Writing term paper
- Supervision – feedback by the teachers on term papers
- Every week

**Examination**
The students will be evaluated based on a term paper in which they introduce one or more selected theoretical approaches and reflect on these related to their dissertation research. The term paper will be graded as pass or fail, where pass is equivalent to a grade B or better. In addition to the examination, students will be asked to read and present papers during the lecture sessions. This participation is compulsory and will be taken into consideration in the finalization of the grade.

**Course coordinators**
Sundeep Sahay (University of Oslo) and Devinder Thapa (University of Agder)

**Dates and Location:**
September 10 -14 University of Oslo, Oslo
October 22 - 26 University of Agder

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**September 10-14, UiO**

Each session will be of 2 hours 45 minutes, of which about 2 hours would be on lectures, and the remaining time would be spent discussing papers from the Reading list. The discussion papers will be presented by students.

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**What is IS theory and the IT artifact?**

**Session time:** 9.15 to 12  
**Date:** September 10th  
**Location:** Ole-Johan Dahls hus Seminarrom Shell (first floor)
Lecturer: Prof. Sundeep Sahay with Guests (Devinder Thapa & Sudhamsu Dahal)

Compulsory readings:

Lecture slides

**Articles**
Van Maanen, J. (1995) *Style as theory*. Organization Science, 6, 1, 132-144. (Full text)
Van Maanen, J. (1988) *Confessional Tales, in Tales of the field: On writing ethnography*, University Of Chicago Press, (Full text)

**Readings for discussion; (TBD)**
Wanda Orlikowski and Suzanne Iacono: *Research Commentary: Desperately seeking the "IT"in IT Research - A Call to Theorizing the IT Artifact*. (Full text)

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**Structuration Theory and Actor-Network Theory (ANT)**

**Session time:** 9.15 to 12  
**Date:** September 11th  
**Location:** Ole-Johan Dahls hus Seminarrom C (third floor)  
**Lecturer:** Prof. Sundeep Sahay with Guests (Devinder Thapa)

Compulsory reading:

Lecture slides

**Articles**

**Readings for discussion; (TBD)**


**Institutional theory**

**Session time:** 9.15 to 12  
**Date:** September 12th  
**Location:** Ole-Johan Dahls hus Seminarrom Shell (first floor)  
**Lecturer:** Prof. Sundeep Sahay

**Compulsory reading:**

Lecture slides

**Articles**


Available at: [https://aisel.aisnet.org/jais/vol18/iss12/4](https://aisel.aisnet.org/jais/vol18/iss12/4)

**Readings for discussion; (TBD)**


**Theorizing Participatory Design**

**Session time:** 9.15 to 12  
**Date:** September 13th  
**Location:** Ole-Johan Dahls hus Seminarrom Java (second floor)  
**Lecturer:** Prof. Sundeep Sahay

**Compulsory readings:**

Lecture slides  
**Articles**  

Suchman, L. (2002 Practice – Based Design of Information Systems: Notes from the Hyperdeveloped World, The Information Society. 18,2, 136-144,  
[http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01972240290075066](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01972240290075066)


**Readings for discussion; (TBD)**  

NB: Direct link to referred articles is provided, other suggested articles can be found in Google scholar. In case, you couldn’t get access to any of the articles mentioned above let the course coordinators know. Students are advised to read listed articles before the session start to get a good grasp of IS theories.